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## LETTER: Writer applauds bill concerning tobacco

**By JOYCE ADKINS**

Special to the Daily Times

BOWLING GREEN — I would like to thank Speaker Jody Richards for introducing a bill that would increase funding for the state's tobacco prevention and cessation programs through the Department of Public Health by \$2.2 million annually.

Due to a reduction in Master Settlement Agreement funds, local tobacco programs statewide have recently been cut across the board by 9.15 percent; in the Barren River District, this resulted in a loss of over \$12,000 to this fiscal year's budget. An additional cut is scheduled for fiscal year 2006-07, reducing the current \$2.7 million to \$2.2 million, while the CDC recommends that the state spend a minimum of \$25 million.

Speaker Richards' bill could not have come at a better time.

Why are these funds so important to the health of our communities? Consider these statistics: 9,100 Kentucky children become regular smokers each year; 7,600 Kentuckians die from smoking-related illnesses each year; and Medicaid costs for smoking related illness are \$448 million a year.

The Barren River District Health Department's tobacco staff has used funds this year to provide tobacco cessation classes to youth and adults; presentations to community groups; tobacco prevention classes to school children; put up (800) QUITNOW billboards; teach the Lifeskills Curriculum (tobacco, other drug, and violence prevention) to at risk students; conduct the Kentucky Youth Tobacco Survey and the Workplace Policy Survey; and provide tobacco information at numerous health fairs and back to school bashes, among other activities.

We have also worked with Lifeskills RPC to host the Youth Tobacco Summit. We have worked with the Barren River Tobacco Prevention Coalition to run radio and newspaper ads, put up billboards, and run theater ads on secondhand smoke.

If our funding is cut for next fiscal year without the additional funds proposed by Speaker Richards, we will not be able to continue with the quality services we have been providing for our communities. I hope that community members will support an increase in funding for tobacco prevention and cessation services.

Joyce Adkins

Barren River District



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